

Considering Israel's Blindness

The Apostle Paul's assessment of His personal ethnicity's Spiritual Condition presents us with a Profound set of Considerations as it relates to the Timing of ALL of Israel being given opportunity to be brought into God's Eternal Family.

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Those called of God in the first century were more than a little bewildered as to why so many of their Jewish counterparts would be so adamantly blinded when it came to accepting what they deemed so obvious. Why weren't the Jewish people, particularly those with such a blessed heritage and such a comprehensive understanding of their scriptures, be inclined to readily accept their own Messiah? Why is it that only so few were willing to 'step over' and embrace the Message and Way of Life brought to that culture by the ministry of their Savior?

Paul Speaks to This Specifically! In Romans 9, 10 & 11:

Chapter 9: *1: I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,*

2: That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

*3: For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, **my kinsmen according to the flesh:***

4: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

5: Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

6: Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8: That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. (See Comment [1] on page 2)

14: What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15: For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16: So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. ...

*18: Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and **whom he will he hardeneth.** [2]*

19: Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

21: Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

22: What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24: Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

25: As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. [3]

26: And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. [4]

27: Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

28: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. ...

30: What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness

which is of faith.

31: But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32: Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; [5]

33: As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Chapter 10: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

3: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. [5]

11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12: For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

16: But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17: So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

18: But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

19: But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. [6]

20: But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

21: But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. [7]

Chapter 11: "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2: God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3: Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged

down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. [8]

4: But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

5: Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. [9]

6: And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

7: What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and **the rest were blinded** [10]

8: (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

9: And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them:

10: **Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see,** and bow down their back always.

11: I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for **to provoke them to jealousy.** [11]

12: Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? [12]

13: For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

15: For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, **what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?** [13]

16: For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

17: And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

18: Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19: Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20: Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.
 22: Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.
 23: And they also, **if they abide not still in unbelief**, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.
 24: For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?
 25: For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.**

26: And so **all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: [14]
 27: **For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.** [15]
 28: As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.
 29: For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.
 30: For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:
 31: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.
 32: For **God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.** [16]

COMMENTS on Romans 9, 10 & 11:

[1] Paul makes the point here that ones' ethnicity is not a guarantee or right of being called to salvation. There is another criterion, which we will see in later verses as being a heart capable of responding appropriately. Israel's tendency toward hard-heartedness is the major consideration. But, there's a reason for that, as we'll see later.

[2] Based on a person's natural mindedness, God sees need to 'harden' what appears to be the majority, but as we'll see, there's good reason. For one, many couldn't make it in this age, being the way they are, the culture in which they live and the way this world is oriented.

[3] We see that even in Old Testament times, it was known that the 'election' would include people not of that exclusive ethnicity.

[4] Here is a clue as to the long-term outcome of this situation. While they are 'blinded' for a time, there is to be a day where that situation is turned-around. (But, not in their first lifetimes!)

[5] One major character flaw was their arrogance toward the true righteousness of God. Their advantage of having the Laws of God given to them, and being bequeathed the Covenant, gave them the impression that their keeping the Law was sufficient to 'earn' them a superior regard by God. As a result, they became self-hardened against the intent of God's Laws, a condition very hard to remedy!

[6] God calling Gentiles instead is intended to 'provoke them to jealousy'. (Comment 11) We need to consider, what for? Just to taunt them, or is there a greater benefit?

[7] It isn't that salvation was denied them. God was continually open to their responses, but it was largely from their side that the problem set-in originally, making necessary the 'blindness condition' that God saw necessary in order to extend them mercy at the appropriate time in the future.

[8] Even God's true servants weren't safe from these hard-hearted reprobates!

[9] Those few who can and who do respond in this age, are those specifically called by God.

[10] God saw need to wrap the entire people in a kind of blindness, because of the nature of the situation, (but as we'll see, there's an interesting eventual outcome.)

[11] Why dangle something in front of them? Why provoke them to jealousy? Why would they be 'jealous' in this age when they, in their blinded condition, see themselves as all-right spiritually? The jealousy thing comes into play when they come to realize that their presumed legal superiority wasn't what God wanted of them and it wasn't the pathway to achieve what they hoped to attain!

[12] This verse is getting more revealing, that there is a time when 'their fullness' will come. Their blinded condition isn't forever. They WILL be brought into the correct relationship with their God some day. WE understand when, when we understand the timing and purpose of the resurrections.

[13] More evidence that there is to be a reversal of the blinded exclusion condition, at some point in time. But, for most, it won't be in their first lifetimes.

[14] Further into the premise that their blinded condition is temporary. Yet, all Israel shall be saved! WHEN? And, does 'all Israel' indicate more than just Jewish peoples?

[15] Now, here we have an enigma, except for what we know. God WILL take away their sins. The question is when? It wasn't in their lifetimes. Here is where Ezekiel 37 provides a startling and important answer.

[16] How can it be said that blinding them (concluding them all into a state of effective unbelief, despite their ardent religiousness) can be considered **having mercy** upon all of them? Unless they are to eventually be given a day of salvation. This is where **our** understanding provides the answer. God in His wisdom realizes that IF the majority of hard-hearted Israel were to be called in this age, the greater majority would exhibit disinterest or reject their opportunity, resulting in their loss of any chance of salvation forever. Whereas, by being blinded, their opportunity period is deferred into the next harvest period. For the vast majority, that'll be in the second resurrection period (Ezekiel 37), when the millennium has established a true and exemplary spirit-born Family of God, who will be able to instruct them correctly, by both word and example. In this age, it'd be nearly impossible to extract from their mentality the false religious concepts that have hard-set into their minds from ancient times: (Man-amplified Legalism and Unitarianism for Jews / Antinomianism and Trinitarianism for Christians.)

Relevant Considerations:

Now, to another question: How could a loving God allow the Jews to mis-identify when the Passover should be observed or the way to count to Pentecost?

First, we need to identify who the Jews are and who is Israel? We have long understood their ethnicity to involve a much larger contingent than just the Jews, but many ignore this.

A. Who are Israelites?

a. Jews (the southern kingdom, were partly restored to the land after 70-years)

b. Israel (the northern kingdom, became dispersed throughout the world, largely Europe, North America, Australia and Southern Africa.)

c. The long-dead of these two houses aren't reunited into a single nation until after the millennium!

d. Ezekiel 37's second resurrection period is after the millennium. (Rev. 20:5)

B. Who are Jews? (Religiously)

a. The Phariseean persuasion (the majority)

b. The Sadduceean persuasion (an elite secular religious minority, the Priesthood.)

c. The Essenian / Ethiopian persuasions (a renegade but zealous austere minority)

d. Judaism today is **not** the religion of the first century nor of the Old Testament.

Why lament just one segment of Israel? Why consider just one faction of the Jewish religion? If Christ were to correct just one group, where would

it leave the others? Yet each of three factions differed from each other.

Christ and the Disciples ignored the Pharisees, and kept Pentecost on the fiftieth day from the morrow after the weekly Sabbath within the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. No explanations were given for the difference from traditionalists of that day indicating no explanation was really necessary. The disciples and saints back then knew what was correct.

C. When was Pentecost Observed in the first century?

a. Pharisees counted from the morrow after the first day of Unleavened Bread (Sivan 6)

b. Sadducees counted from the morrow after the weekly Sabbath (tho' not all did) (a Sunday)

c. Essenian / Ethiopians counted from the last day of Unleavened Bread. (Sivan 12)

d. Christ knew of these differences during His ministry and never corrected any of them.

e. The early Church kept it differently than the Jews (on Sunday not the Jew's Sivan 6.)

f. Sivan 6 was a Friday that year (would be if the 14th of Abib was a Wednesday)

g. Only one of these count methods will bring us to "the morrow after the seventh Sabbath". (as in b above.)

h. Met in a private location, (a house), not at the Temple, as they did things differently.

i. The reference to Pentecost having 'fully come' (Acts 2) indicates there had been a pre-mature observance. (In fact, the Day of Pentecost observed by the Disciples in Acts 2 is easily shown to have been Sivan 8 that year.)

D. Jewish Theology has more problems than just the Pentecost matter.

a. Have wrong date and tradition for Passover (Temple observance was after the end of the 14th)

b. Have wrong concept of 'monotheism' (identify a single Being rather than a dual entity)

c. Their theological position caused them to reject their Messiah,

d. They didn't realize the true identity of their God of the Old Testament,

e. They have no awareness of or reason for observing the Last Great Day,

f. They have no real understanding of the resurrections.

Protected From Early Failure

The key to understanding the situation is to realize that it isn't God's intention to call the majority of the Jews OR of ten-tribes of Israel in this age. Only a few are blessed with a calling now! The majority are blinded to preserve and protect them from rejecting their opportunity, which preserves them until the greater harvest period which will open up after the millennium and after Satan is banished (after being released briefly after the millennium).

That harvest, without Satan and without the influence of false theology that plagues this age, will result in a much greater success rate than otherwise would occur. It is in this regard that 'the Covenant' with Israel will be fulfilled. God will raise them from the dead, restore their national unity, cleanse their faulty theology, and put His Spirit within them. (Ezekiel 37:14).

Yet, they do have an informational advantage over the non-religious world, one which will give them a head start over the secular world once their opportunity period opens up. (Romans 3:1-2)

Presently Inconsequential

God isn't particularly concerned with which day the Jews or renegade Israel keeps. They aren't for them! Passover isn't specifically for ethnic Jews. It is for the Bride of Christ. Pentecost actually celebrates the first resurrection, (the first harvest) which involves the Saints of the Most High God, not religious Jewry. The day actually FOR them is the Last Great Day, which is largely absent from their consciousnesses and practical observances.

I have attended Messianic bible studies, and find them completely uninformed with regard to the existence of or the meaning of the Last Great Day.

The Last Great Day celebrates the day of opportunity for those dead who were never afforded a legitimate opportunity in their lifetimes.

I wouldn't regard Jewish tradition as having any value with regard to establishing correct New

Testament observances. They mis-conceived a lot, and God gave them over to their preferred persuasions. He's not calling them at this time, except for a select few!

We in God's Church are blessed to have the understanding we do of these matters. Hopefully, this adequately addresses these questions.

So, Who IS a Jew?

Romans 2:28 *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*

29: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Individuals from a wider ethnicity are being called of the Father (John 6:44) to populate the Family that God is assembling to comprise the Bride of Christ. It is this assemblage (the Church) that is regarded as 'spiritual Israel' during this 'first dispensation'. Ethnicity is not the determining factor presently, though many who have been called are of an Israelite heritage, not necessarily realizing it. Most churchgoers are unaware of the identity of the dispersed ten Tribes of Israel.

Grace, not Race!

While a firm assertion is made among Protestant denominations that election is of Grace, not a matter of race, yet they – due to their ignorance of our ethnic heritage – overlook the fact that most who are called are of the Israelite heritage! The overwhelming majority of Christians are of a single race, most of whom have no awareness of from whom their nations descended.

Those of the "house of Judah" tend to embrace the Jewish religions. Those of the "House of Israel" tend to identify with Catholic / Protestant beliefs. This is consistent with their religious heritage, that being the reason they were taken captive out of the land and not allowed to return. Researching into the source of Mithraism Cults, we find it to have incubated in the areas where the northern ten tribes were resettled by their captors. The Mithraic Cult belief system has influenced much of what is regarded as "Christianity".

Given a Head Start Advantage

Romans 3:1 *"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?*

2: Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

3: For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

4: God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

5: But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

6: God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?"

The ultimate 'issue' in all of this is the Judgment of the World. Paul in the above passages alludes to the fact. Yet, how could His Judgment be fair if the people were never allowed an opportunity? Vengeance imposed upon humanity without their having been given a real opportunity would render God's Judgment upon them as unjust!

Blinded Only for a Time

Then, we need to consider the 'blindness' issue. Paul explains that their blindness is "of God" and "temporary". Blindness is imposed upon them for two reasons: one, to defer their opportunity period to a later time (when conditions are better), and two, to provoke them to jealousy once that blindness is removed. It will create in them a more fervent response, seeing that non-ethnic peoples attained what they sought ahead of them!

When their blindness is removed, the Jewish race will be living in a religious world where Satan has been bound or cast into the Lake of Fire, depending on when. (Rev. 20:) Under this condition, their opportunity period will be within the most amenable period, making any failure to be their own fault. True knowledge will envelop all of the world then (Hab. 2:14), reflecting the "mercy" spoken of in Romans 11:32.

